

# The Classical Bulletin

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Vol. IX

APRIL, 1933

## The Double Face of Epicureanism

It is a coincidence of singular interest that the two leading Roman poetic exponents of two mutually exclusive interpretations of Epicureanism were contemporaries in life and alike in their preëminence as men of letters. Titus Lucretius Carus, the sage and the scholar, stands for an erudite and philosophical—almost esoteric—exposition of Epicureanism as a system of thought, approaching most closely the mind of the founder himself. But in Gaius Valerius Catullus another voice is articulate, that of the popular and applied interpretation into which the philosophic system so readily degenerated. Of course, Lucretius is a conscious and avowed expounder of Epicureanism as a fixed body of doctrines and rules of conduct; while Catullus, perhaps without formal advertence to any school, merely gives expression to that *carpe diem* attitude which was part of the *Zeitgeist* of late republican and imperial Rome among great numbers of the city's élite and elegant.

The two poets have not a few bonds of genius and of life. Lucretius lived<sup>1</sup> from 99 to 55 before Christ, Catullus from 84 to 54. Lucretius had as his patron C. Memmius, and to him he dedicates the *De Rerum Natura*; in 57 B. C. Catullus was on the staff of the same Memmius, when Memmius went forth as propraetor of Bithynia. Lucretius mourns "the troubled state of his native land,"<sup>2</sup> while Catullus takes an active share in the opposition to Caesar and the popular party. Whether the two poets ever met we cannot, of course, know. But it has long been believed that Catullus had read the *De Rerum Natura* of his illustrious contemporary, and that he paid it the tribute of imitation by borrowing many of its phrases, especially in the *Theseus* and *Ariadne* episode of his sixty-fourth poem, the epyllion *Peleus and Thetis*.<sup>3</sup>

But the differences between the two bards far outweigh these and other correspondences. Lucretius is the lone sage, the watcher upon the hilltop of wisdom's height, the delver into the mysteries of the mighty universe with all its multifarious potencies and diversified phenomena. To him *naturae species ratioque*, the outer semblance and inner essence of *natura*, *natura gubernans* and *natura creatrix*, as well as the dartingly swift movements of his elemental atoms in elemental void—these are the objects of abiding interest and joy. We can envision him through fancy's eye, alone in the speechless watches of the night, as he gazes in awe-struck wonder at the majestic wheeling of the heavenly

bodies, when with a lyric burst of fervor to the founder Epicurus he cries:

For soon as ever thy planning thought that sprang  
From god-like mind begins its loud proclaim  
Of nature's courses, terrors of the brain  
Asunder flee, the ramparts of the world  
Dispart away, and through the void entire  
I see the movements of the universe.<sup>4</sup>

The philosopher, aloof and severe in his self-imposed isolation, feels no need of the consolation and sympathy of his fellowmen. But Catullus, the poet of Epicureanism-in-practice, perhaps during the illness that heralded his death, pens lines of complaint to Cornificius because of his friend's fancied neglect and his failure to speak words of comfort:

Ah, Cornificius, ill at ease  
Is thy Catullus' breast;  
Each day, each hour, that passes sees  
Him more and more depressed:

And yet no word of comfort, no  
Kind thought, however slight,  
Comes from thy hand. Ah, is it so  
That you my love requite?

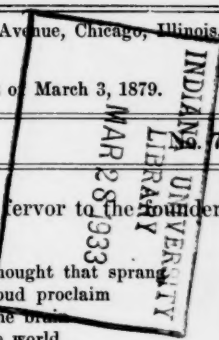
One little lay to lull my fears,  
To give my spirit ease,  
Ay, though 'twere sadder than the tears  
Of sad Simonides!<sup>5</sup>

Catullus is preëminently a poet of passion, and he has achieved his highest lyric intensity in his poems on Lesbia. From Lucretius the passion of love evokes a singularly harsh and lashing sarcasmic treatment.<sup>6</sup> Both poets sense the appeal of babyhood.<sup>7</sup> But it is in consonance with the melancholy of Lucretius to ponder over the helplessness of the new-born babe, to compare it with a mariner cast upon a sea-wrecked shore, and to say:

And with a plaintive wail he fills the place,—  
As well befitting one for whom remains  
In life a journey through so many ills.<sup>8</sup>

The joys of wine and riotous companionship are the theme of Catullus in his twenty-seventh poem, addressed to his cup-bearer. Lucretius favors a quieter gathering by some stream-side<sup>9</sup>; as Tennyson's fine paraphrase in his *Lucretius* puts it:

No larger feast than under plane or pine  
With neighbors laid along the grass, to take  
Only such cups as left us friendly-warm,  
Affirming each his own philosophy.



For despite the fact that he can walk alone armed with philosophy's sword, Lucretius is not insensible to the calm happiness that friendship can afford. Indeed, he is but reiterating the precepts of his master Epicurus, who remarks in the twenty-seventh of his *Sovran Maxims*:

Of all the means which are procured by wisdom to assure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends.<sup>10</sup>

Both Lucretius and Catullus are moved to sympathetic helpfulness toward their fellowmen. The younger bard's ninety-sixth poem comprises in six gracious lines a sincere and appealing *consolatio* to his friend Calvus on the death of his wife Quintilia. Lucretius has a missionary zeal to rescue his fellows from the evils which he believes to be weighing them down; his quietism is not that expressed in Tennyson's *Lotos-Eaters*, where the choric song idealizes a *securitas* like that associated with the Epicurean divinities:

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,  
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined  
On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.

Catullus probably shared the scepticism that gripped the minds of many Romans in the last century of the Republic in their attitude to life beyond the grave.<sup>11</sup> But the thought of a dull and dreamless slumber forever more stirs in him the longing to snatch the pleasures of the fleeting hour—to eat, drink, and be merry, for the morrow means death and dissolution:

Live we, love we, Lesbia dear,  
And the stupid saws austere,  
Which your sour old dotards prate,  
Let us at a farthing rate!  
When the sun sets, 'tis to rise  
Brighter in the morning skies;  
But, when sets our little life,  
We must sleep in endless night.<sup>12</sup>

"Live we"—*vivamus!* It is the trumpet call of popular Epicureanism expressed in a mad, orgiastic note—the call which another poet represents Death himself as whispering to the wayfarer:

Pone merum et talos. Pereat qui crastina curat.  
Mors aurem vellens *Vivite* ait, *venio*.<sup>13</sup>

Upon such reasoning Lucretius pours all the venom of his philosophic scorn. No Stoic, no Cynic, could be more passionate in his renunciation of *carpe diem* than the poet of philosophic Epicureanism:

This too, O often from the soul men say,  
Along their couches holding of the cups,  
With faces shaded by fresh wreaths awry:  
"Brief is this fruit of joy to paltry man,  
Soon, soon departed, and thereafter, no,  
It may not be recalled."—As if, forsooth,  
It were their prime of evils in great death  
To parch, poor tongues, with thirst and arid drought,  
Or chafe for any lack.<sup>14</sup>

With righteous indignation he fancies Nature herself rising to rebuke the man who is unwilling to die, unready to part from the banquet of life like a well-sated guest.<sup>15</sup> And to the greybeard who has not yet wearied of the endless monotony of daily existence he portrays Nature as addressing words of stinging objurgation:

"Yet, since thou cravest ever  
What's not at hand contemning present good,  
That life has slipped away, unperfected  
And unavailing unto thee. And now  
Or ere thou guessed it, death beside thy head  
Stands—and before thou canst be going home  
Sated and laden with the goodly feast."<sup>16</sup>

To the seeker after interminable rounds of pleasure, Lucretius believes, life is destined to pall as a thing of deadly tedium:

Non tibi praeterea quod machiner inveniamque  
Quod placet, nil est: eadem sunt omnia semper

says Nature<sup>17</sup> in her rebuke. And far more than in Shelley's

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not,<sup>18</sup>

does the pleasure-seeker long always for what is not at hand. Lucretius draws a vivid picture of the effete man of the world,<sup>19</sup> who in tedious disgust at the city's pleasures dashes madly behind galloping ponies to his country-house, only to yawn in bored *ennui* the moment he places a foot upon the threshold.

What then are men to do—how spend the few precious hours of this elusive life, which, as both philosophic and popular Epicureanism insist, was to be the be-all and end-all of existence? *Vivamus!* is the reply of Catullus—a response so clamorously reëchoed by Horace in his lighter odes.<sup>20</sup> But Lucretius, sage and almost ascetic, counsels first and foremost a life of study and contemplation, a wrestling with the great mysteries of life and the universe:

In such a way  
Each human flees himself—a self in sooth,  
As happens, he by no means can escape;  
And willy-nilly he cleaves to it and loathes,  
Sick, sick, and guessing not the cause of ail.  
Yet should he see but *that*, O chiefly, then,  
Leaving all else, he'd study to divine  
The nature of things, since here is in debate  
Eternal time and not the single hour,  
Mortal's estate in whatsoever remains  
After great death.<sup>21</sup>

St. Louis, Mo.

WILLIAM CHARLES KORFMACHER

#### NOTES

1. The dates of birth and death for both poets are much disputed.
2. Nam neque nos agere hoc patriai tempore iniquo Possumus aequo animo nec Memmi clara propago Talibus in rebus communi desse salutis, *De Rerum Natura* 1.41-43.
3. Confer Munro's comment on *De Rerum Natura* 3.57 in *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura* 2.29-33.
4. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Emi-* Vol. ii, pp. 179-181.
5. *De Rerum Natura* 3.14-17 in the translation of William Ellery Leonard (New York, E. P. Dutton and

Co., 1921). 5. Catullus 38, in Sir Theodore Martin, *The Poems of Catullus* (London, 1861). 6. *De Rerum Natura* 4.1058-1287. 7. Et Venus imminuit viris puerique parentum Blanditiis facile ingenium fregere superbum, *De Rerum Natura* 5.1017-1018; Torquatus volo parvulus, etc., Catullus 61.216-225. 8. *De Rerum Natura* 5.226-227, in the translation of Leonard, *op. cit.* 9. *De Rerum Natura* 2.29-33. 10. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 10.148, in the translation of R. D. Hicks (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), Vol. ii, p. 673. 11. One might instance his *mutis sepulcris*, 96.1; *mutam cinerem*, 101.4. 12. Catullus 5.1-6, in the translation of Martin, *op. cit.* 13. *Appendix Vergiliana*, *Copa* 37-38. 14. *De Rerum Natura* 3.912-918, in the translation of Leonard, *op. cit.* 15. *De Rerum Natura* 3.931-949. 16. *De Rerum Natura* 3.957-960, in the translation of Leonard, *op. cit.* 17. *De Rerum Natura* 3.944-945. 18. In *To a Skylark*. 19. *De Rerum Natura* 3.1060-1067. 20. Confer among many others *Odes* 2.3.13-16. 21. *De Rerum Natura* 3.1068-1075, in the translation of Leonard, *op. cit.*

### The Conclusion of the *De Rerum Natura*

It is not certain whether Lucretius deliberately chose to end his great poem with an affecting portrayal of death to balance the introductory invocation of the goddess of life and spring. The fact that he did so end his poem contributes toward a unifying impression of the whole. If he did not consider his work complete, I should like to think that, had he had the time to complete it, he would not have added another book, but merely revised and amplified the work in its present form.

As we have the poem, the closing lines on the plague at Athens leave us with a taste of what is best in Lucretius—not science, but poetry. However much of the description he may have borrowed from Thucydides, it is the poet in him that inspired these verses. Lucretius forgets, the reader forgets, what scientific theory it is that is supposed to be illustrated by this picture of death. With the poet we are carried beyond the halls of science to the towering temple of truth. Overcome with awe in the presence of that deity, Lucretius here dares speak of nothing but what is universally true. He shows the havoc wrought by a tragic plague. In his portrayal of it, he expends all his resources; yet, in reverence of the dark mystery of death, he refrains from advancing any theory of his own regarding its nature. Forgotten is all his scientific machinery: he speaks at last as a human being, in his native tongue. Though an Epicurean, he admires the unselfishness of those great-hearted souls who, conquering the fear of death, died in the service of their stricken brethren. When he sees the neglected temples, he refrains from pointing to them as proof of his philosophical dogmas.

As one closes the *De Rerum Natura* upon the Athenians engaged in bloody quarrels over their dead, the thought suggests itself that this picture might well be taken as symbolic of the struggle in the soul of Lucretius himself between his misguided reason and the voice of nature in him: the latter crying out that death is not the end of all, the other relentlessly countering with argument upon argument to prove that it is. To us the philosophy of Lucretius is incomplete, and we feel that he realized this. But as far as his knowledge of life is concerned, the poem has a fitting completion. We feel that he has given us all that he knew of life which would

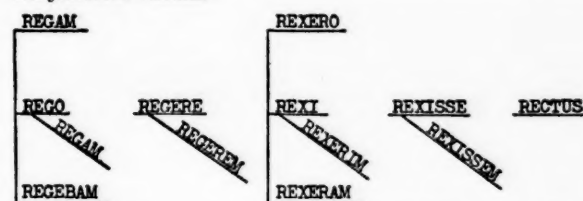
be of interest to us. And the words of St. Paul, "If Christ be not risen from the dead, our faith is vain," take on a fresh meaning.

Florissant, Mo.

ROBERT L. HODAPP, S. J.

### Latin Verb Forms

The following diagram will be found useful in enabling pupils to visualize the manner in which the various tenses of the Latin verb are built on the principal parts. In constructing the diagram, draw two figures resembling the letter E, the first to be followed by a single straight line, the second by two such lines. Then add the oblique lines as below. On the middle series write the principal parts of the verb, including the perfect infinitive. This gives you the two principal indicatives followed by their respective infinitives. On the upper series write the future tenses, on the lower series the imperfect and pluperfect, and on the oblique lines place the subjunctive forms. If desirable, a third E may be added for the forms of the verb *sum*, thus showing the formation of the compound tenses. The formation of the passive voice may be indicated by writing a small *r* over the *m*'s and the *o* in the present system. The value of the diagram lies in its perfect symmetry and in the manner in which it correlates indicative and subjunctive forms.



Detroit, Mich.

HUGH P. O'NEILL, S. J.

### Announcement

High school teachers who may wish to adopt the so-called colometric method of reading Cicero and to include the *Pro Archia* in their schedule, can now obtain the full text of this oration, arranged colometrically, in mimeographed form. Accompanying the text, there are a brief introduction, the rules of the arrangement adopted, and notes on the structure and rhetoric of the oration. As this pamphlet has been prepared with a view to immediate service in the classroom, all more technical phases of colometry have been left out of consideration. The introduction and the notes are addressed to the teacher. The pamphlet of thirty-four pages sells for thirty-five cents, postpaid. Orders may be sent directly to the Business Manager of the CLASSICAL BULLETIN, St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo. The text of the *Pro Archia* alone, for the use of pupils, will be mimeographed on request, the quantity price being ten cents a copy, plus postage.

Let us not forget that the adoption of the test, "what is it good for," would abolish the rose and exalt in triumph the cabbage.—Emerson



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### Editorial

Vague knowledge is no knowledge. Hence scholarship, which in its proper sense is perfect knowledge, must needs be accurate knowledge. Accuracy, however, is a quality that can belong to one's knowledge of the essentials as well as of the accidentals of any subject, to one's grasp of broad general principles as well as of details, to one's understanding and appreciation of the big fundamental issues as well as of the lesser issues and smaller problems more or less directly connected with the subject. In the nature of things, thoroughness and accuracy in essentials should come first. It would be a perversion of the notion of scholarship to think that one can become a true scholar in any field merely by meticulous attention to minutiae. Knowledge of an isolated fact is knowledge of a part without knowledge of the whole of which it is a part. Such knowledge is hardly deserving of the name of knowledge, and it is wholly undeserving of the name of scholarship. Now as the powers of the human mind are in the concrete very limited, and as close attention to one object of knowledge tends to absorb the mind so completely that it has little energy left for other objects connected with it, or for the whole, of which those objects are but the parts, it is often necessary in practice to make a compromise between the thoroughness and accuracy with which we apply ourselves to essentials and that which we can reasonably bestow upon accidentals and details. The broad and cultivated mind will strike this balance

with a sureness which is conspicuously absent in much contemporary scholarship.

In the realm of classical studies the essential thing is a thorough and accurate knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages inasmuch as they are the media of human thought and emotion. The chief purpose of classical studies has always been to put us in possession of the great heritage of Greece and Rome as contained primarily in their literature. Both the languages and the literatures of the Greeks and Romans are even today deemed highly valuable to humanity principally by reason of the perfection they attained during certain definite periods and in certain definite writers commonly called "classical." The great educational value of the classics, at any rate, is chiefly predicated on the basis of a comparatively small group of outstanding ancient writers, to which Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Virgil and a few others belong.

Now if this appraisal of the function of classical studies in modern life is even approximately correct, the reader can readily draw his own conclusions as to what ought to be the content, mode of presentation, relative emphasis, attention to details in Latin and Greek courses as given in high schools, colleges, and graduate schools. Obviously a solid grounding in the languages must come first: an accurate knowledge of vocabulary and syntax, a direct appreciation of idiom, a feeling for style, for the power of rhetoric, for the connotations of words, for the imaginative and emotional value of figures of speech, etc. Moreover, this linguistic and literary training is not a matter of two or three years; it can only be acquired by a slow and detailed study of the best writers through a period of at least six or eight years, supplemented by constant translation into classical Latin and Greek. Before this end has been achieved, and it can not be achieved except by much reading of the greatest classical writers in prose and verse, introduction to secondary and post-classical writers will be but a hindrance to the student. Literary history, archaeology, speculation in philology, attention to ancient life and law and customs—these and similar interests must not be pursued for their own sakes, but must be subordinated to the main purpose of appreciating and appraising at first hand the great literary productions of antiquity. And these productions must be first studied in themselves. Too much and too minute attention to details of background will not help, but hinder this study. But the language, style, ideas of the writers themselves cannot be studied with too much accuracy and thoroughness.

It will not be necessary to carry this detailed application of the principles of true scholarship to the classics any further. The reader can do that for himself. In doing so he will probably find much to criticize in current classical programmes, and he may find something to improve in his own method of procedure. Self-criticism is a necessary condition of progress, and classical teachers ought to be the last people in the world to neglect so obvious a means of furthering the cause to which they are dedicated.

### Poetry and Sculpture in Friendly Rivalry

The fact that the death of Neptune's priest Laocoon is the subject both of a beautiful description in the *Aeneid* (II, 199-224) and of a much-admired group by a famous sculptor, is a happy coincidence which may inspire the teacher of Latin to spare an hour from his routine and give his students an informal talk on the different ways in which two fine arts, poetry and sculpture, make their appeal. I should like to outline in the following pages a brief and simple method, a sort of *demonstratio ad oculos*, in which this difference of appeal can be brought home even to young students.

We may begin with what is familiar to the student of Latin. Virgil is an artist in words. The material he works in is language, which includes both sound and sense of words. What use has he made of this material in the description of Laocoon's death? Before all else, as is his wont, he creates atmosphere; he puts us in the proper mood. There is a mournful tale to tell, and of this the repetition of the letter *m* gives a preliminary hint:

Hic aliud maius miseriis multoque tremendum  
obicitur magis, atque improvida pectora turbat.

The thought is ominous in itself; but its ominousness is heightened by the recurrence of the same sound, which is like the distant rumbling of a storm. Before the storm breaks we are introduced to the principal character, Laocoon. He is a priest,—a fact of importance in the sequel; so we are not surprised at the poet's picturing the dignity of the sacrificial act; and he does it by the slow movement of an entire line:

Laocoon, ductus Neptuno sorte sacerdos,  
sollemnis taurum ingentem mactabat ad aras.

In Virgil's practice, predominance of spondees is a favorite device for creating an air of solemnity. Out of the quiet contemplation of the sacrifice, we are startled by the interjection *ecce autem*, which brings the leisurely imperfect *mactabat* to an abrupt end. "Look," the poet says; "something awful is coming." "And there are two of them": *gemini*. Two what? Our curiosity is aroused, but not at once satisfied. There is a parenthesis to heighten the tension, and in it the sense of the first word is intensified by the recurrence of the *r*-sound in the second: *horresco referens*. Our horror is all the deeper the less its cause is known. Only the end of the second line relieves the suspense, and what a shocking relief it is at that!

Ecce autem—gemini a Tenedo tranquilla per alta—  
horresco referens—immensis orbibus angues  
incumbunt pelago, pariterque ad litora tendunt.

Great poets are wont to revel in contrasts. The sacrifice was naturally a peaceful affair; and peaceful, too, was the mighty background, the deep: *tranquilla per alta*. But what the poet is about to reveal inspires horror: *horresco*. In tune with the sentiment is the sudden change of rhythm. Moreover the serpents not only look alike, but act in concert: *pariterque*. The heavy

spondee in *incumbunt* is followed by a rapid movement in the rest of the line. You can see it with your own eyes, the very rhythm pictures it, how the serpents, after one powerful forward swoop, rapidly make for the shore. Mackail gives *incumbunt* its full emotional value: "they lean forward over the sea," and Page notes that old pictures of the sea-serpent "will well illustrate Virgil here."

At first only a huge floating mass is visible; gradually particulars even of color become discernible. When the monsters approach the shore, the deep is no longer tranquil, but lashed into spray by their coiling bodies:

pectora quorum inter fluctus arrecta iubaeque  
sanguineae superant undas; pars cetera pontum  
pone legit sinuatque immensa volumine terga.  
fit sonitus spumante salo.

Now that the serpents are only a short distance from the scene, their piercing, bloodshot eyes and the hissing of their forked tongues strike terror into the spectators, causing them suddenly to disperse for safety. The breaking up of the crowd is made graphic by the breaking of the line in the middle:

Iamque arva tenebant,  
ardentisque oculos suffecti sanguine et igni  
sibila lambebant linguis vibrantibus ora.  
Diffugimus visu exsangues.

The final tragedy, too, is painted with deft strokes. The small sons of Laocoon are attacked, and when the priest hastens to their aid, he is himself entwined in the coils of the slimy creatures. Laocoon vainly endeavors to free himself, and the two monsters raise their poisonous heads above their victim, towering over him in token of victory. Meanwhile the unfortunate priest fills the air with piercing shrieks of mingled agony and despair, which Virgil likens to the roar of a wounded ox fleeing from the sacrificial altar:

Illi agmine certo  
Laocoonta petunt; et primum parva duorum  
corpora natorum serpens amplexus uterque  
implicat et miseros morsu depascitur artus;  
post ipsum auxilio subeuntem ac tela ferentem  
corripiunt spirisque ligant ingentibus; et iam  
bis medium amplexi, bis collo squamea circum  
terga dati superant capite et cervicibus altis.  
Ille simul manibus tendit divellere nodos  
perfusus sanie vittas atroque veneno,  
clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit:  
qualis mugitus, fugit eum saucius aram  
taurus et incertam exussit cervice securim.

Against this background of poetry, let us see how Agesander of Rhodes interprets the same theme in marble. The most conspicuous feature of the chiseled group as a whole is its symmetry and proportion. To obtain these effects in an unobtrusive manner, the artist has skilfully placed a youth on either side of the central figure, and, without in the least detracting from naturalness, has succeeded in distributing the folds of the serpents equally over the entire group. The smallness of the boys brings out in greater boldness the figure of

Laocoon. The general effect of pleasing variety is further helped by the artist's attention to facial expression. Michael Angelo's admiration for this creation in marble was so great that, out of reverence for the original, he refused Julius II's request to restore several broken parts.

There are of course other artistic details that could be explained to students even of high school age and would be appreciated by them. The boy on Laocoon's right is represented as just succumbing to the fateful venom. His left hand conceals the head of one of the serpents in order not to focus the attention on himself. His muscles are not rigid, for he has just expired and is in the act of sinking to the ground. In marked contrast is the older boy on Laocoon's left. He is intensely alive; his muscles are convulsively contracted. Here is a fine portrayal of filial love. Oblivious of his own danger, he is more concerned with the sufferings of his father. Accordingly his countenance expresses love and grief, but not fear. So greatly is he absorbed in his father's affliction, that he makes a purely mechanical movement to release his leg from the grasp of the viper.

The most important of the figures is that of Laocoon. Every detail in the ensemble is subordinated to, and directed toward it. Both boys look up at Laocoon; both raise their hands towards him. For the same reason one of the serpents is poised in the very act of striking Laocoon's thigh. The tightly drawn muscles, the breath taken in, and the swollen veins of the body—all conspire to portray intense physical pain. Besides revealing an accurate knowledge of anatomy, the portrayal is extremely realistic. The figure almost breathes. Most remarkable, perhaps, is the treatment of face and head. The tightly closed eyes, the wrinkled brow, the sagging mouth, and drawn countenance exhibit the maturity of the artist's technique. The cry of the succumbing priest is reduced to a muffled and despairing groan. The tossing back of the head shows vanquished impotence. The tragedy is complete.

After explaining these details, and such others as he may wish to add, it is time for the teacher to ask the important question, Which of the two arts has the better of the other in the representation of the death of Laocoon, poetry or sculpture? I say, "the important question," for it is now that the students' minds should cease to be receptive and be stimulated into action. There is not one in the class but will see that the sculptured group is more "realistic," because of its direct appeal to the eye; poetry is less impressionistic because it appeals less to the eye. Does this mean that a sculptor commands a more universal audience than a poet does? His marble can speak even to the ignorant who cannot read a line. Should we urge against this view that in the matter of universality poetry far outruns the appeal of sculpture, because a description in verse can be multiplied through printing, and even rendered into other tongues? We might perhaps end the discussion by retorting that sculpture has the same advantage,

for pictures can be multiplied indefinitely and in every land.

But there is a point of view which gives precedence to poetry; I mean its scope and versatility. Virgil is able to picture the why and the where and the how. Nor has he bare words to rely upon for this multiple effect. He can draw to his heart's content upon the whole symphony of rhetorical devices: onomatopoeia, alliteration and assonance, variety of rhythm, emphatic juxtaposition, telling antitheses, sudden breaks in the line, parallelism or chiasm, and the endless interplay of measures—a matter, by the way, in which Virgil excels. The sculptor is by the nature of his material more circumscribed. He must seize upon one instant in a whole train of events, the most impressive and most dramatic, it may be, yet only one instant, with possibly a hint of the past or the future. Not that this limitation is altogether unredeemed, yet limitation it certainly is.

A word might perhaps be added by the teacher regarding the presence of defects in the two masterpieces. Since the written word is more ethereal than the molded form in marble, students will find it more difficult to detect deficiencies in poetry. A constant wonder of the reader of Virgil is whether the simile of the wounded, bellowing ox is in the best of taste. Does it sustain the dignity of the earlier portion of the narrative? And seeing it comes last in the narrative, and is bound to leave a good or a bad taste in the reader's mouth, is it not perhaps an example of Virgilian "frigidity"? And as to Agesander's work, are there no defects discernible? Is there nothing in it that grates on our taste? Can we stand before the group and enjoy the expression of pain with unmixed delight?

Questions like these will set the young critics a-thinking, and prepare them for the crucial test: "Suppose you had to be content with one of the two works of art, which would you prefer?" In spite of its simplicity, a little esthetic discussion such as this will carry with it its own reward. Minds apparently dull when dealing with grammatical facts, are often stimulated into keen activity in the presence of the finer things of life. The upshot of the debate will probably be the conclusion that neither of the two arts has a claim to absolute superiority. They work in different materials; each achieves effects proper to itself; in a word, they are not commensurable. Both have a place in a liberal education; both are needed to round out man's spiritual life. Engaged on the same theme, they are not at war with each other, but ready, at most, for a friendly tournament, not for a hostile encounter. As the three Graces dance hand in hand, and the nine Muses work in harmony to shed grace and beauty and joy on life, so the seven fine Arts are but seven gateways opening into the same land of beauty. Nevertheless, in spite of their common purpose, the student may yet prefer one to the other. "Objects of sense are not as it were simple and self-evident propositions, but admit of endless analysis and the most subtle investigation. We do not see nature



with our eyes, but with our understandings and our hearts."<sup>1</sup> So it is perhaps a subtle matter of taste which art we prefer. And yet, one critic has said: "The Temple of art is built of words. Painting and sculpture and music are but the blazon of its windows."<sup>2</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. W. Hazlitt, *On Taste*. 2. J. G. Holland, *Plain Talks on Familiar Subjects*.

### Egypt, Guardian of Lost Classics

As the lotus was the emblem of the Nile, and sedge of Upper Egypt, so in Pharaonic heraldry was *Cyperus Papyrus* the badge of its ancient home, the Delta. Theophrastus said it grew also around a lake in Syria, under the Lebanon;<sup>1</sup> and Pliny had heard of paper-manufacture supplied from the Euphrates about Babylon.<sup>2</sup> Both references indicate the exceptionalness of the growing plant outside of Egypt. That land enjoyed, throughout the period of Greek and Latin culture, a practical monopoly of the supply. In our times the species is extinct in its ancient habitat. In Abyssinia, on the Blue Nile, it still grows; in Sicily; and in botanical gardens.

If Egypt's rôle in the history of Greek literature had been confined to producing the physical vehicle of its transmission, I suppose we should content ourselves with brief thanksgiving. It is for a different reason that the eyes of classical students of these latter generations have been turned toward her ὡς ὀφθαλμοὶ παιδείας εἰς χεῖρας τῆς κυρίας αὐτῆς. Beyond the marshlands of the Delta, the sands of Upper Egypt, thanks to an arid climate, have proved the best of all conservers of ancient written stuff. Out of them have come almost all the antique papyri we possess, and of these a very large share are in Greek.

Naturally Egypt could conserve only what she received; and Greek manuscripts would not have been found there—least of all in Upper Egypt—save altogether exceptionally, before the Hellenistic Age. Alexandria was founded in 331 B. C. With the inauguration of its library under Ptolemy I (king from 305 to 285 B. C.) and the development of the same under Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B. C.), that city became the metropolis of Greek letters no less than of the world's commerce.

Only by degrees could a Greek population form in the cities and towns of Upper Egypt sufficient to call for a notable accumulation of the implements of culture. Yet it is a happy omen that the oldest of dated Greek papyri, a document from the island of Elephantine, just below the First Cataract of the Nile, should be a marriage contract between Greeks dated within twelve years of the death of Alexander. His posthumous son was still living, and titular king of the vast empire undivided; Ptolemy was as yet but a satrap: Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου βασιλεύοντος ἔτει ἑβδόμῳ Πτολεμαίου σατραπεύοντος ἔτει τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτῳ. So the text begins, carrying us to the year 311 before the Christian era.<sup>3</sup>

Quite as striking, and more directly to our point, is the fact that one literary work on papyrus, found in a grave at Abusir, not far from Giza, is judged on paleographical grounds to be even older than the marriage contract. Timotheus (c. 447-357 B. C.), lyrist, contemporary of Euripides, innovator on the received tradition of musicianship, was known to us by allusions and stray lines. The papyrus roll of his *Persae*, now at Berlin, gives in J. M. Edmonds' edition a text of over 250 verses.<sup>4</sup> While the top of the roll is missing, the remainder, some mutilated segments excepted, is complete, comprising the tumultuous climax of a sea-fight that can only be Salamis, and, at the end, an invocation of Apollo which affords the poet opportunity of a welcome word about himself. The Timotheus papyrus, written within a few decades, as Professor Schubart remarks, of the poet's life-time, carries us back to the very generation of Aristotle and Demosthenes.<sup>5</sup>

But if this papyrus is the oldest among those that restore lost classics to our possession, others carry texts in themselves of greater moment, and of much larger content. An earlier lyrist, Bacchylides (c. 505-450 B. C.), contemporary of Pindar, was like the latter a singer of the triumphs of athletes in the Sacred Games. More than once, in fact, the two poets celebrated the same victor, the same victory. Before 1897, the largest fragment known of Bacchylides amounted to a dozen lines. In that year appeared Kenyon's *editio princeps* of *The Poems of Bacchylides from a Papyrus in the British Museum*. The papyrus roll, from an unknown site in Egypt, though incomplete and mutilated, has yielded a score of victory odes and dithyrambs, six of them almost entire. Bacchylides is not Pindar—all the editors hasten to forewarn us; but he is no mere foil to Pindar: he is an accomplished poet with attractive gifts of his own, including gratefulness to those from whom he drew acknowledged inspiration: "Poet is heir to poet, now as of old; for in sooth 'tis no light task to find the gates of virgin song."<sup>6</sup>

Alas! A light article like this is inevitably swamped by so ample a subject. I must name Meander (c. 340-292 B. C.); and how can one name Menander without dilating largely on the greatest, possibly, of papyrus discoveries? Gustave Lefèvre published in 1907 the *editio princeps* of a papyrus codex of the fourth or fifth Christian century found by him at Kôm Ishqâw, the ancient Aphroditopolis. This papyrus, now in the Cairo Museum, with some supplementary finds, has put into our hands not complete texts, it is true, but extensive portions of four comedies and significant fragments of many more. The chief writer of the New Attic Comedy, the source and model of classical Latin comedy, has thus taken form and figure after a disappearance of fifteen hundred years.

Having recalled attention to these few instances of metrical works restored to us from the sands, I mention but one work in prose, the *Athenian Constitution* of Aristotle, published, it is thought, toward the end of its author's days (384-332 B. C.). Our copy of the

treatise is written not in the elegant book-hand of the Bacchylides roll, but in the homely script of several private hands on the back of papyrus rolls that had served in the first instance to carry the accounts of the manager of an estate near Hermopolis Magna. The accounts were dated in the eleventh year of Vespasian (78/79 A. D.). Probably the Πολιτεία was copied on the verso around the end of the century. The rolls were found, apparently, in the cemetery of Meir, and they were acquired by the British Museum. The first edition, by Kenyon, was published in 1891. Though the beginning of the text is lost, and some lacunae occur at the end, the work is substantially intact. Naturally it is of unexcelled importance for our knowledge of the political antiquities of Greece.

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#### NOTES

1. *Plants*, IV, viii, 4; IX, vii, 1. 2. *Nat. Hist.*, xiii, 11.
3. Schubart, *Papyri Graecae Berolinenses* (Bonn, 1911), Pl. 2.
4. Loeb Library, *Lyra Graeca III* (London, 1927), p. 308; *Editio princeps*: Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Timotheus, Die Perser* (Leipzig, 1903).
5. *Das Buch bei den Griechen und Römern* (Berlin, 1921), p. 40.
6. *Fragm. 4. Jebb, Bacchylides* (Cambridge, 1905), p. 23.

#### Note on Papyrus and Ancient Letters

An expression in the article "Papyrus and Ancient Letters," of the March BULLETIN, distressed its author not a little when it fell under his eye in print. Fragments of parchment, he said, had been found "from the early Roman period in Assyria." (P. 47, col. 1, top.) A reader who happened to be also a mind-reader might have succeeded in making pertinent sense of that. May I, with apologies, elucidate. Papyrologists, having Egypt in view, often arrange their materials under three great epochs: Hellenistic (Ptolemaic), Roman (Imperial), Byzantine. The founding of Alexandria (331 B.C.), the battle of Actium (31 B.C.), and—by reason of administrative measures—the reign of Diocletian (284-305 A.D.) serve as convenient incipits. The "early Roman period" I had in mind was, therefore, pretty much the Age of Augustus. Assyria was of course then part of the Parthian Empire. The parchments in question were two deeds of sale, each entire, found about 1909 in a sealed earthen jar at Avroman in what is now Iraq, not far from Bagdad. They were edited in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* for 1915 (XXXV, p. 22 ff.) by Ellis H. Minns. They are dated, respectively, in the 225th and in the 291st year of an unnamed era, the Seleucid or the Arsacid, probably the former. In that case, the earlier date is equivalently 88 B.C.—more than fifty years before "the Roman period"!—the later, 22/21 B.C. In a recent discussion of the earlier document, Professor Rostovtzeff has argued for an Arsacid dating, that is, in the instance, 24 B.C. (*Yale Classical Studies* II, New Haven, 1931, pp. 41/2.)

E. R. S.

The teacher who is conducting a class through Caesar, or Cicero, or Virgil, should never lose sight of the fact that his work is not wholly preparatory—that he is already dealing with a great literature. The more he can make his students see that it is a great literature, through the virtue of his own enjoyment of it, and, in particular, through the power with which he can read it to them in Latin, and the power with which he can train them to read it themselves, the easier will be his task, and the richer its palpable rewards.—William Gardner Hale

#### Honor Work in High School and Series Nova

"The purpose of honor work," says the 1930 High School Syllabus, "is to awaken and foster interest in scholarship and to develop intellectual inquisitiveness, alertness and effort."<sup>1</sup> This purpose will be admirably and adequately attained, I believe, by the recently published *Series pro Scholis Classicis Nova*, curante T. Corcoran, D. Litt. Fr. Corcoran's scholarly work is well known to readers of the BULLETIN from the excellent articles of his that have appeared from time to time in its pages. The *Series Nova* is a distinct innovation: a handy pamphlet edition of Latin and Greek Classics.

Ten such pamphlets have already been published. Each contains a few hundred lines of text in large, clear type, printed on good paper, together with a Latin preface by the editor, maps, illustrations, and exercises. The maps, too, are *novae*—specially prepared for each booklet, with the place-names in Latin or Greek, according to the language of the text. Each booklet contains about forty pages, and sells for the remarkably low price of ten cents.

There are six Latin booklets so far; four contain selections from St. Augustine, two from Cicero. The former are: (1) S. Augustinus: Puer et Adolescens; (2) Conversio; (3) De Sancta Monica; (4) De Imperio Romano; the latter are: (1) Cicero: Roma Antiqua; (2) Imperium Romanum.

The St. Augustine booklets, in addition to the general contents mentioned above, include also a brief life of the Saint, and a few notes on his style. S. Augustinus: *De Imperio Romano* will prove of special interest to students of Virgil, since "inter cetera, Virgilium de urbe, de imperio, de indole Romanorum civium disserentem interpretatur."

Three of the Greek booklets thus far issued contain selections from Isocrates; the fourth is: S. Basilus Magnus: *De Litteris Graecis*. Attica is edited for beginners in Greek: "Graecae linguae tironibus proposita. Textus facillimus, ex Isocratis orationibus compositus; cum tabellis grammaticis, exercitiis, cartis, aliisque ad discipulorum usum adjunctis." The original text is closely followed; "aliquantulum tamen aetati adeo tenerae indulgere visum est," says the kind editor in his preface, and has accordingly removed subjunctive and optative forms. In addition to the one hundred and sixty lines of text, it contains seventy lines from Cicero, in which the latter "Atticam, Athenas, Isocratem laudat."

These interesting booklets will aid the director of honor work in the high-school classes "to inspire those chosen for it, to direct and assist them in such wise as to throw each upon his own ability, initiative and self-reliance."<sup>2</sup>

Florissant, Mo.

ALPHONSE M. ZAMIARA, S. J.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "The Ancient Classical Languages," *Syllabus for High Schools*, Chicago and Missouri Provinces. 1930. P. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. These booklets may be obtained from Messrs. Browne and Nolan, Dublin.



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